

Representative Patricia Lantz
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

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Representative Patricia Lantz
2006 Session Preview
26th Legislative District



Dear neighbors,

First and foremost, I hope you all are having a wonderful New Year! It is that time of year again. We are back in Olympia for another legislative session.

This past year serving as your representative in Olympia has been an amazing experience. I am very proud of all we were able to accomplish and I am excited to get back down to Olympia to continue to work for you.

In this update I would like to share some of the changes we have made in the last year as well as some the things I have planned for the upcoming session.

Don't hesitate to contact me if you ever have questions, comments, or just want to say "Hi". My door is always open and I would love to hear from you.

Again thank you for the honor to serve as your elected representative; it has truly been a privilege.

Sincerely,

State Representative Patricia Lantz
26th Legislative District

Contact Information

PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
(360) 786-7964

E-mail:
Lantz.Patricia@leg.wa.gov

Toll-free Hotline:
1-800-526-6000

TTY-TDD (hearing impaired):
1-800-526-6000

Committees:

- Judiciary, *Chair*
- Capital Budget
- Health Care

This past year was a tremendous success!

In the last year we passed significant legislation that will help make Washington a better place to live and raise a family.

- **Education:** Overall, the 2005 Legislature increased state funding for Washington's public schools by \$981 million – about \$468 per student.
- **Health care:** We passed legislation that will provide health care for an additional 38,750 uninsured children as well as prescription drug relief for seniors that will save taxpayers upwards of \$100 million.
- **Jobs:** I sponsored legislation to create the Job Development Fund which provides grants to cities, towns and other government entities for projects that create local jobs, stimulate economic development, and promote community growth. The city of Bremerton received over \$4 million in funds.
- **Helping our Soldiers:** We granted property tax relief for widows and widowers of honorably discharged veterans as well as property tax exemptions for those who are disabled in combat.
- **Fighting Meth:** I fought hard for a new law that restricts access to the cold and allergy medications used to "cook" meth. A similar law in Oklahoma reduced meth lab incidents by 80 percent. We need to make sure that our local law enforcement has all the resources they need to fight this scourge in our community.



Transportation

- **Bridge Fairness:** Last year I sponsored legislation that eliminates the collection of the state sales tax on construction of the new Tacoma Narrows Bridge. Recently, the House passed this important piece of legislation. The measure will again be considered in the Senate and it is my hope that it will be approved this year.
- **Passenger Ferries:** Permanent passenger-only ferry service for our region will continue to be a top priority in Olympia. With the construction of the new bridge slowing traffic in our region we need to have alternative forms of transportation to get people to and from work.
- **Lights on the Bridge:** I was pleasantly surprised at the beautiful lights display that took place on our bridge this holiday season. I will continue to look for ways to fund this wonderful exhibition without using taxpayers hard earned dollars.

What are we doing this year?



Ensuring Warm Homes

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina the Federal Energy Information Administration predicts that consumers can expect to spend anywhere from 50 to 70 percent more in energy costs this winter depending on where you live. The Federal Government as a result of recent budget cuts under funded an important government program known as the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

This cut could leave thousands of Washington's elderly and needy families without heat this winter. I am sponsoring legislation to fund a one time investment that increases this energy assistance fund by \$7.6 million. We are fast-tracking this legislation through the House and Senate with hopes of getting this assistance to families right away. No one deserves to go cold this winter.



Early Learning

This summer I hosted an incredibly successful public forum that focused on the new and exciting field of early childhood development. More than 200 people attended this great event. We brought in UW researchers as well as community resource providers to let parents in our community know about the most recent research. This year the legislature is looking at some additional early learning bills and I am extremely excited that we are finally stepping up to make sure our kids come to school ready to learn.

If you missed our forum and would like to know more about what all of us can do to make sure our children get the resources they need, just contact my office. I would be happy to share some of this exciting info.

Health Care

As a member of the Health Care committee I will continue the fight to lower our health care costs. This year we are focused on covering children and making health care more affordable.

- Cover all Kids (2010): I will continue my commitment to get all the children of Washington State health care coverage. This does not mean that they will just all be covered by the state. We will be looking at ways to help businesses be able to offer health plans to their employees and families.
- Purchasing for quality/other efficiencies: Like the efforts we made in previous sessions to save Washington millions in health care costs by purchasing prescription drugs in bulk, we will be examining additional means to save the state and taxpayers money on our Basic Health Plan.

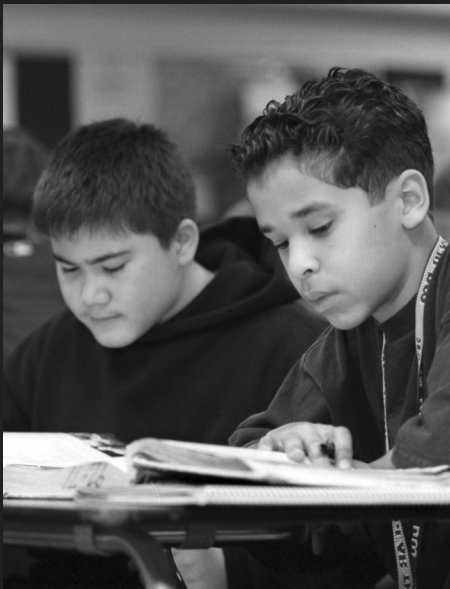
- Small business premium sharing: Small businesses do not have the buying power to be able to bargain lower rates with healthcare providers. We will be looking at ways to help them pool together to help drive down premium costs.
- Patient Safety: We will once again be visiting the issue of increasing patient safety here in our state. We will be using a three legged approach that aims to make much needed insurance reforms, changes the litigation system so that the process is fairer, and helps reduce the number of medical errors. The issue should not just be about Doctors and Lawyers. We need to find a common sense solution that has the patient's wellbeing at its core.



Improving Education

Last year the legislature created Washington Learns an 18-month comprehensive education study to take a tough look at our state's education system. It examined early learning through K-12, to higher education and made recommendations on how our system can improve. The program brought together educators, business leaders, community advocates and administrative officials and they have come up with some recommendations that we will be considering in the upcoming session such as:

- Streamlining the transition points in our educational system pre-kindergarten all the way through college.
- Working on alternatives to the WASL so that children who do not test well will not automatically fail to graduate.
- Ways to ensure that our high schools are preparing students for the workforce as well as college. A close look needs to be taken at how to get our students to adequate math levels.



..... Sex Predator Laws



As a mother and a grandmother, the safety and well being of our children has been my top priority in Olympia. In my time in the legislature we have passed sex offender laws that made Washington a nation wide leader on this difficult issue. I have continued this commitment to protecting our families this year by sponsoring a number of bills that will give prosecutors and law enforcement the resources they need to catch and convict Washington's most dangerous sex offenders. Some of these bills include.

- To Catch more offenders:**
- HB 2408 Changes the statute of limitations for sex offenses committed against children to allow prosecutors to use DNA evidence to identify perpetrators of sex crimes any time after the commission of the crime
 - HB 2410 Makes the possession of child pornography a sex offense.

- To Convict more offenders:**
- HB 2411 Creates a minimum sentence of 25 years to life for offenders who use force in the commission of rape of a child (under age 15) in the first degree or child molestation in the first degree and 25 years to life for offenders who are strangers to the victim.
 - HB 2412 Increasing penalties for failure to register as a sex offender.
- To Protect our Children:**
- HB 2407 Electronic monitoring of sex offenders that have committed the most serious sex offenses.
 - HB 2409 Makes sex offenders register within 72 hours of moving to Washington and toughens rules on how homeless offenders are monitored.
 - HB 2454 Protecting communication between sexual assault advocates and victims
 - HB 2576 Establishes a sexual assault protection orders, so that sexual assault victims can be protected from contact with a perpetrator.

I am confident that we will approve legislation this year that will move us forward on the path to making and keeping our children safe.